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ABSTRACT

Dual-career analysis is misleading as a guide to actual developments in wives' employment and family economic patterns at different levels of the class system. Weaknesses can be examined through seven empirical propositions concerning the determinants of family employment patterns at various class levels. (1) Despite recent gains, married women in elite professions remain numerically insignificant among all married women. (2) Rather than serving as a model of sexual equality, the elite dual-career pattern most often reproduces traditional husband-wife inequalities. (3) Despite high education levels, affluence, and other conditions facilitating career orientation, most wives of high income husbands do not engage in careers. (4) Women in elite professions are far more likely than comparable men to be single, married and childless, or divorced. (5) Married women in professional occupations are still concentrated in traditionally female, low-paid professions. (6) Continued growth of married women's employment in clerical, lower level professional, and service jobs overshadows the elite dual-career stratum. (7) Unlike elite dual-career couples, most working and subordinate middle class dual-earner couples cannot afford expensive services and leisure time. Contemporary analysis of women's employment and family change must move beyond limitations of dual-career analysis to encompass situations of nonelite women. (YLB)

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FAMILY SUCCESS AND SEXUAL EQUALITY:

THE LIMITS OF THE DUAL-CAREER FAMILY MODEL

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The dramatic increase in adult women's employment since World War Two has generated change in the appearance and reality of women's economic position, family economic patterns, and husband and wife relationships (Carter and Glick, 1976; Johnson, 1978; Kreps and Leaper, 1976; Ross and Sawhill, 1975; Masnick and Bane, 1980). Recently, the sociological discussion of these developments has centered on the "dual-career family" phenomenon. Family analysts have treated young couples that strive for high-level careers for wife and husband, shared child raising, and domestic egalitarianism, as the key social innovators of an emerging "postindustrial" society (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971b, 1976). In the social science literature on dual-career families, and also in popular media, the yardstick of innovation and achievement represented by these couples has become a generalized cultural standard. This model of family success is used to evaluate the experience of all employed women (and often, housewives as well), male-female couples of all class positions, and all family-worklife arrangements.

It is important to examine the adequacy of the theoretical framework--and particularly the conception of social change, family mobility and class and sexual divisions--which underlies the burgeoning dual-career literature. Because of its theoretical explicitness, the work of the Rapoports will be used to clarify assumptions which, to a greater or lesser extent, also characterize other researchers in this field (1969, 1971a, 1971b, 1976, 1980).

A number of aspects of the dual-career framework require brief summary: first, the types of careers considered relevant to the framework are elite and restrictive (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971a: 18). The earliest dual-career studies in the United States were focused on wives who were doctors, lawyers or college teachers (Epstein, 1971; Holmstrom,

1973; Poloma and Garland, 1972). More recent research has been centered on the latter group of academic wives (or wives with doctorates) [Bryson, et al., 1975; Martin, et al., 1976; Arkin and Dobrovsky, 1978; Berger, et al., 1978; Douvan and Pleck, 1978; Farris, 1978]. The dual-career argument rests upon an assumption of increasing female access to high level professions and managerial positions (Safilios-Rothschild, 1977:557).

Second, the dual-career families serve as models for dual-earner (non-career) couples at all levels of the class system. On the one hand, the dual-career couples confront the strains between the demands of occupation versus those of family in most acute form. Their solutions to these problems have general significance (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971a:18). On the other hand, the elite dual-career pattern represents an ideal to be emulated. It "becomes more accessible to the masses as an option" once it has been introduced and made visible by the pioneer, elite couples (21).

Third, a key dimension of the elite, dual-career experience is its basis in a new norm of sexual equality. The latter is seen as closely tied to the high career aspirations of dual-career wives.

Fourth, the motivation underlying wives' pursuit of careers is not an economic one. Rather, this is viewed as strictly the product of the diffusion of new cultural values that center on personal self-development, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and similar concerns.

Finally, the dual-career couples are expected to grow in number. Their individual actions and mdoes of adjustment initiate a broad process of social change, because they create new (family and worklife) "role structures" and lifestyle options that will be generalized (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971b:216-220, 236-241; 1971a:15-30; 1976:9-24, 343-369).

As a framework for understanding emerging family and employment patterns the dual-career approach is fundamentally flawed. Its perception of the contemporary impact of married women's employment and other family economic developments is not merely inadequate. In many cases it runs directly counter to the realities which have transformed the relationship of families to the class system in the postwar period. These difficulties stem from a central weakness: the erroneous generalization of both structural developments and a normative model from the limited class context of certain professional and managerial couples.

These weaknesses can be illustrated through a series of empirical propositions concerning the determinants of family employment patterns at various levels of the class structure. The analysis will proceed from the elite sectors which form the starting point for the dual-career analysis and move downward. It will touch on a number of class divisions and sectors: (a) the elite, new middle class (based in highly paid professions, senior management posts, and related positions); (b) the traditional, small business sector of the middle class (based on ownership of small-scale productive property); (c) other subordinate middle class sectors; and (d) working class sectors (based in blue-collar, service and clerical occupations), which will be divided by income levels (Braverman, 1974: 24-30, 378-380, 403-409). Though very rough and limited by Census definitions and data availability, these catagories suffice for a discussion of diversity in family economic patterns in relation to the dual-career analysis.

Women's Employment and Family Patterns in the American Class Structure

1. In spite of recent gains, married women in the elite professions of law, medicine and college teaching remain a numerically insignificant group among married women as a whole. Though the dual-career analysis

TABLE 1. Percentage of lawyers, doctors and college teachers who were women, 1970 and 1979

Elite Profession	Women as a percentage of all members of elite profession (N of women). 1970[a]	1979[b]
Lawyer, judge	4.8% (13,317)	12.4% (62,000)
Doctor	9.0 (25,133)	10.7 (46,000)
College teacher	28.6 (141,741)	31.6 (172,000)
Elite Professions - TOTAL	(180,191)	(280,000)

NOTES: a) Experienced civilian labor force (US Bureau of the Census 1973 a: 1,541)
b) Employed persons only (US Dept. of Labor, 1980 b: 166,174.)

TABLE 2. Married women (spouse present) in elite professions and the labor force, 1970 and 1979.

Position in the labor force	Married women (spouse present) as members of elite professions (number) and labor force participants (number) 1970[a]	1979estimate[bc]
Lawyer, judge	5,477	25,000
Doctor	14,024[d]	26,000[d]
College teacher	70,867	86,000
(1) Elite profession - TOTAL	90,368	137,000
(2) Labor force participants TOTAL	17,519,015	23,625,000
Married women in elite professions (1) as percent of married women in labor force (2)	0.52%	0.58 %

NOTES: a) Experienced civilian labor force (US Bureau of the Census, 1973 a: 1,541)
b) Employed persons only (US Dept. of Labor, 1980 b: 166,174
c) Estimates assume identical proportions of women married (spouse present) in 1979 as in 1970.
d) Estimates for doctors apply female "married, spouse present" ratios for "physicians, dentists and related practioners" to female doctors.

devotes great attention to the option of wives pursuing elite professional careers, it is remarkably unconcerned with the question of the social availability of such positions. Examination of American trends from 1970-1979 in Table 1 shows increases in the proportions of women among lawyers, and to a lesser extent, doctors and college teachers. However, these increases have been insignificant in terms of opening major career possibilities for married women seeking employment. As Table 2 indicates, married women in these three elite professions constituted less than six-tenths of one percent of all married women in employment in both 1970 and 1979.

(Tables 1 and 2 roughly here)

The addition of other highly paid professions (architect, computer systems analyst, engineer, scientist and mathematician) to the elite profession category of law, medicine and academia increases this proportion by a negligible amount. (Wives in the eight elite professions constituted nine-tenths of one percent of all employed wives in 1979 [U.S. Bureau of Census, 1973a:541; U.S. Department of Labor, 1980b:166,174]).

Information concerning the numbers of married women in high management positions is less easily obtained from U.S. government sources. However, recent private studies show that tiny numbers of women reach upper level positions, and that the opening of some career management opportunities to women has had minimal impact on the employment prospects of the overwhelming majority of married women, or even those of college-educated wives in lower-level "professional" and "managerial" occupational sectors (Allen, 1980; Gallese, 1980). The dual-career framework's assumption of expanding elite career possibilities for married women (and related neglect of married women's position in subordinate, traditionally female professional and managerial occupations) appears highly problematic in light of this evidence of persistent segregation by sex, and

and limited availability of well-paid, developmental careers, in the occupational system.

2. Rather than serving as a model of sexual equality, the elite dual-career pattern most often reproduces traditional inequalities between husband and wife. The disparity in spouses' income levels that are widely observed (Poloma and Garland, 1971:754; Holmstrom, 1973: 203; Bryson and Bryson, 1980:249) reflect, in large measure, the large differential between male and female earnings at the top managerial and professional levels of the occupational system. While most senior women managers of large corporations earned a salary of less than $50,000 in 1980, the average for all senior officers was $134,500 (Allen, 1980). Practicing female doctors earned 57 percent of the income of their male colleagues ($27,558 versus $47,945 in 1972), and sexual differentials in earnings were comparable, or more pronounced, among academics and lawyers (Pennell and Pennell, 1976:44; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1973a:1). Given the great impact of labor market differentials on relative wife and husband contributions to the family economy, it is remarkable how little attention is paid to the policy issue of equal pay for women in the dual-career literature.

Income differentials, greater dependence on the husband's career, and other factors, provide the basis for the reproduction of sexual inequalities in domestic decision-making and responsibility. Most dual-career couples manifest a "neo-traditional" pattern in which:

> the status of provider remains the predominant male role with the wife in a "helping" economic position. The wife continues to be responsible for the traditional homemaking role, with her husband possibly assisting her (Poloma and Garland, 1971:744; see also, Holmstrom, 1973:155; Berger et al., 1978:27; Epstein, 1971:557-559; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976: 318-319).

The assumption of some dual-career theorists that personal commitment to

new egalitarian values will in fact produce equal relationships in practice (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971b:216-217) appears naive. The isolation of the struggle of couples for sexual equality from first, key economic and job-related conditions of interpersonal equality, and second, collective movements (especially Women's Liberation) that generate institutional and cultural change and reinforce individual actions (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971b:238; Holmstrom, 1973:162), is a central weakness of the dual-career framework.

This limitation is related to the restricted class focus of this approach. A number of studies have suggested that wives' greater economic contribution to family income generates more equal sharing of domestic tasks, or more likely, provides a basis for significant struggle in that direction (Blood, 1963:289-293; Heer, 1957; Hiller, 1980:14-16; Ferree and Turbin, 1980:3-5). If elements of this argument are correct, then the dual-career framework's search for a general model of wife and husband egalitarianism among elite strata of the class system is misplaced. Certain preconditions of domestic equality are more apt to be found in working class (and subordinate middle class) families (Poloma and Garland, 1971:745), than among elite couples with very high incomes in which husband-wife differentials in incomes are greatest. Figure 1 illustrates the increasing superiority of a husband's earnings relative to that of his wife as the husband's earnings rise from $999 or less to $25,000 or more, for dual-earner couples employed full-time, year-round in 1978. The latter group (defined by the highest husband incomes and greatest husband superiority in earnings) contains the largest proportions of elite, professional and managerial husbands and wives (see Table 3, row 9; also, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980a:132-133; 250-251; 1973b: 116-119). Given the small increment in wives'earnings ($ 191.34) for each $ 1,000.00 increase in husbands' income expressed by the unstandardized regression

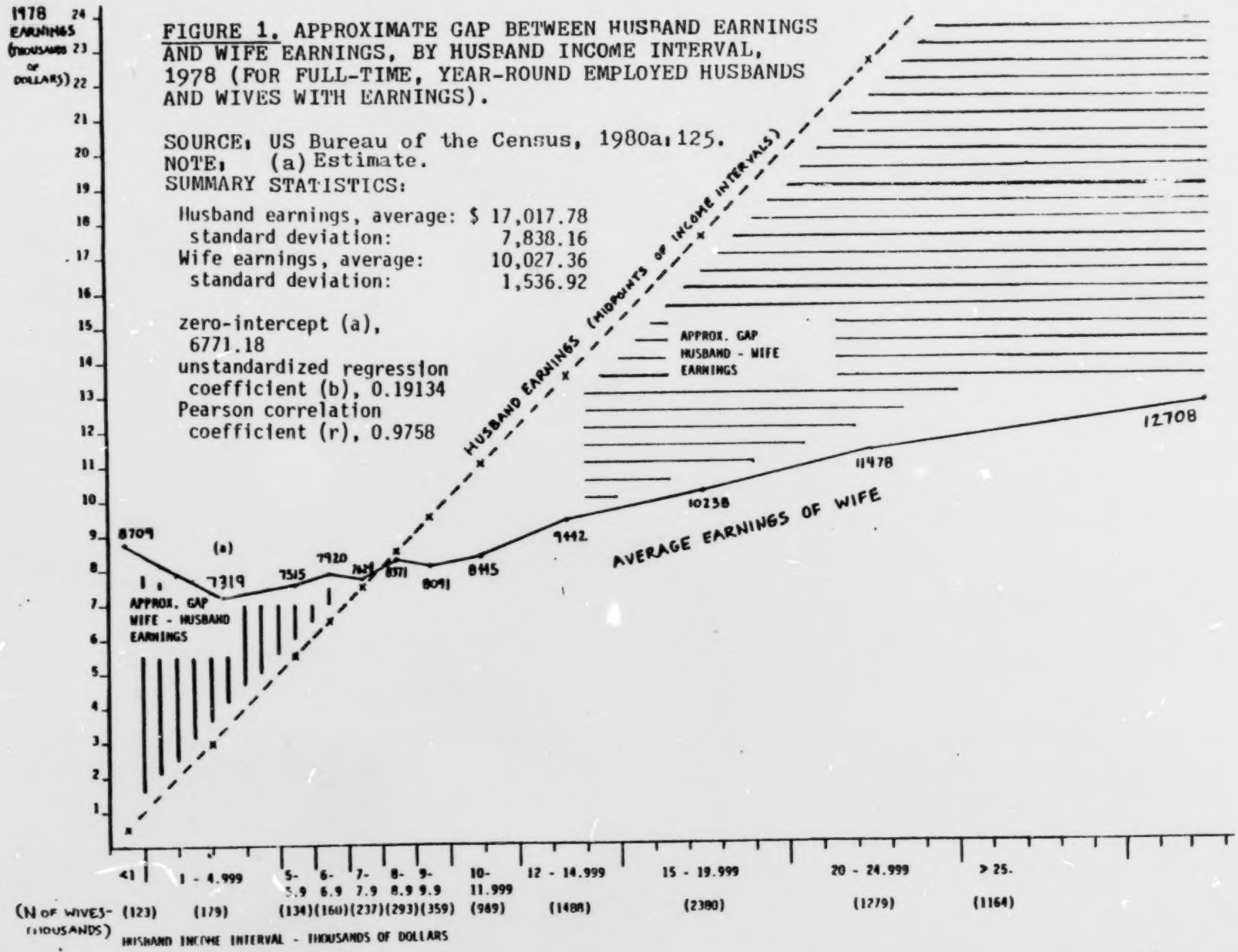

FIGURE 1. APPROXIMATE GAP BETWEEN HUSBAND EARNINGS AND WIFE EARNINGS, BY HUSBAND INCOME INTERVAL, 1978 (FOR FULL-TIME, YEAR-ROUND EMPLOYED HUSBANDS AND WIVES WITH EARNINGS).

SOURCE: US Bureau of the Census, 1980a:125.
NOTE: (a) Estimate.
SUMMARY STATISTICS:

Husband earnings, average:	$ 17,017.78
standard deviation:	7,838.16
Wife earnings, average:	10,027.36
standard deviation:	1,536.92

zero-intercept (a), 6771.18
unstandardized regression coefficient (b), 0.19134
Pearson correlation coefficient (r), 0.9758

coefficient (Figure 1), it is not surprising that extreme disparities are found between the highest income husbands and their wives. It is ironic that the dual-career theorists' concern with marital equality becomes focused exclusively within a stratum which is marked by a pattern of husband-wife inequalities in income and occupational position.

(Figure 1 roughly here)

At the same time, the dual-career approach overlooks the large and growing sectors of full-time dual-earner couples with lower than average incomes in which wives' earning levels are close to (i.e., roughly 70-90 percent of) those of their husbands. Husbands' incomes range from $8,000 to $15,000; the averages for wives range from $8,000 to $9,500. As described by Figure 1 and Table 3 (rows 4 through 6), this income sector includes many younger working class couples, with husbands employed as craft and operative workers, and wives as clerical workers, as well as traditional working class couples (wives in operative and service jobs) and non-elite middle class couples (husbands in lower professional and managerial positions) [Hayghe, 1976:17; Braverman, 1974:353-354; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1973a:280-283, 783-786]. These groups will be discussed in Point 6 below.

(Table 3 roughly here)

These shortcomings point to a central flaw of the dual-career framework: its skewed conception of the dynamics of historical change, and the relation between class position and new family employment patterns. The framework ignores both the elements of traditionalism and female subordination among elite class groups, and the real structural changes which have most affected the vast majority of working class and non-career middle class wives. Points 3 through 5 below examine the continuities in elite, new middle class wives' relation to their husbands' careers; pressures on career women to eschew marriage and family responsibilities;

TABLE 3. ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPLOYED WIVES BY INCOME LEVEL OF HUSBANDS (FOR FAMILIES WITH HUSBAND AND WIFE EMPLOYED FULL-TIME, YEAR ROUND [FYR], 1978)

	HUSBAND INCOME INTERVAL	AVERAGE WIFE EARNINGS	WIFE EARNINGS AS APPROX. % OF HUSBAND EARNINGS	NO. OF WIVES (FYR)	FYR WIVES AS % OF ALL WIVES OF FYR HUSBANDS	HUSBAND-FREQUENT OCCUPATIONS [b]	WIFE-FREQUENT OCCUPATIONS [c]
1)	LT $1,000	$ 8,709.	> 870 %	123,000	32.2 %	FARMER, SELF-EMPLOYED, MANAGER	CLERICAL, SERVICE, PROFESSIONAL
2)	$1,000-5,999	$ 7,515.[a]	135 [a] %	313,000	30.3 %	BLUE COLLAR WRKR, FARMER AND FARM WRKR	CLERICAL, SERVICE, OPERATIVE
3)	6,000-7,999	$ 7,743.	110 %	397,000	28.0 %	OPERATIVE, CRAFT, SERVICE	CLERICAL, SERVICE, OPERATIVE
4)	8,000-9,999	$ 8,217.	90 %	652,000	33.7 %	OPERATIVE, CRAFT, SERVICE	CLERICAL, SERVICE, OPERATIVE
5)	10,000-11,999	$ 8,445.	75 %	969,000	34.1 %	CRAFT, OPERATIVE, PROFESSIONAL	CLERICAL, SERVICE, OPERATIVE
6)	12,000-14,999	$ 9,442.	70 %	1,488,000	33.2 %	CRAFT, OPERATIVE, PROFESSIONAL	CLERICAL, SERVICE, PROFESSIONAL
7)	15,000-19,999	$ 10,238.	60 %	2,380,000	30.1 %	CRAFT, PROFESSIONAL, OPERATIVE	CLERICAL, PROFESSIONAL
8)	20,000-24,999	$ 11,478.	50 %	1,279,000	24.6 %	CRAFT, PROFESSIONAL, SALARIED MANAGER	CLERICAL, PROFESSIONAL, SERVICE
9)	$25,000+	$ 12,708.	< 50 %	1,164,000	19.5 %	PROFESSIONAL, SALARIED MANAGER	CLERICAL, PROFESSIONAL MANAGER

SOURCE: US BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, 1980[b]: 125,132-133,251-252

NOTES: a) Describes wife-earnings for $5,000 - 5,999 husband income group only.
b) For all FYR males Occupations listed account for 50% or more of husbands' employment.
c) For all employed wives (with employed husbands). Occupations listed account for 67% or more of wives' employment.

and sexual segregation in professional and managerial occupations. These factors underlie the minimal availability of dual-career options (Point 1) even for well-educated women.

3. In spite of high education levels, affluence and other conditions that facilitate a career orientation, most wives of high income husbands do not engage in careers or even regular (non-career) employment. Rather, they maintain and enhance their families' class position by providing vital assistance to husbands' (and also children's) career (and class) advancement. The dual-career framework assumes that increasing education and affluence will generate personal values conducive to strong career commitment among elite wives (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971b:216-217). Many labor force analysts support this assumption by documenting the general relationship between increased education and increased employment participation among women (Sweet, 1973:126, U.S. Department of Labor, 1975:187). As applied to economically privileged wives of elite new middle class position, however, this type of analysis, and the dual-career argument in particular, ignore the conservative influence of these wives' economic dependence, stake in their husbands' competitive advancement, and specific relation to the imperatives of husbands' careers.

Examination of the impact of a husband's economic position on his wife's likelihood of participating in the labor force makes clear, in crude terms, the restrictive nature of certain elite class milieux. Figure 2 depicts the labor force participation rates of two groups of wives: economically privileged wives whose husbands had incomes in 1977 of $50,000 or more and whose median education level was the highest of all groups of wives (approximately 14.5 years of school completed); and wives whose husbands were at (or slightly above) the median income level ($13,000-$14,999), and who had completed 12.5 years of school. In spite of their

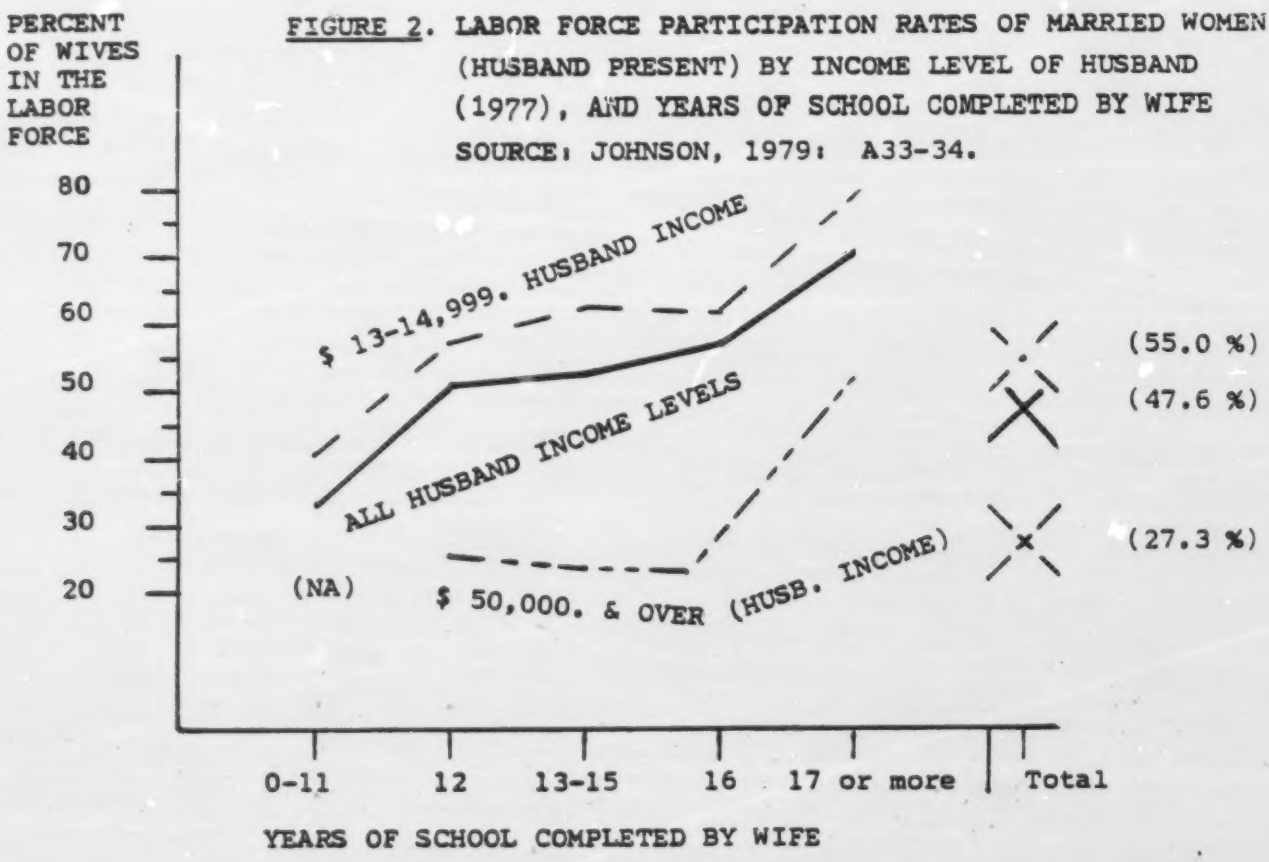

FIGURE 2. LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF MARRIED WOMEN (HUSBAND PRESENT) BY INCOME LEVEL OF HUSBAND (1977), AND YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED BY WIFE
SOURCE: JOHNSON, 1979: A33-34.

superior educational backgrounds, the privileged wives were half as likely as the latter group to be labor force participants. Even the most highly trained of the privileged wives (with graduate school education) were less likely to be using their skills in the labor force than wives who were merely high school graduates in the second group. Comparable patterns are found for wives with and without children, of varied ages, and for wives analyzed in relation to elite husband occupations (doctor, lawyer, engineer, financial manager) rather than husband income level (Johnson, 1979:A28-34; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1973a:1-3, 783; for a similar analysis, see Sweet, 1973:132).

(Figure 2 roughly here)

The privileged wives' underutilization of their skills and lack of career (or employment) activity can be explained by their vicarious, yet vital relation to the class system which is mediated through varied support activities. The wife of elite, new middle class position advances her husband's and children's prospects by first, economically "putting her husband through" professional training in some cases by temporary job-holding or use of inherited income (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1974:85; Feldman, 1974:230; also Marceau, 1976:204-213); second, providing professional and business contacts through the wife's family networks (Marceau, 1976:209); third, entertaining the husband's business associates, maintaining his public image through community and organizational service, advising him on career matters, and sometimes ghost-performing parts of his job (Papanek, 1973:860-863; Fowlkes, 1980: 44-123); fourth, taking all responsibility as "parent, homemaker and director of family life" so that the husband's off-the-job environment is fully supportive and sustaining (Fowlkes, 1980:173); and fifth, translating the family's material resources into a progression of advantageous

educational and social experiences that help secure and enhance the children's future class position. It is an oversimplification to say that such wives are conforming to traditional values of a general nature in sex role behavior. Their traditionalism must be understood in relation to the powerful advantages and negative sanctions that are part of a specific husband-dependent, elite position in the class system.

4. Women in elite professions and management positions are far more likely than comparable men to be single, married with no children, or divorced as a consequence of their career involvement. In 1970 women in highly competitive, predominantly male professions (college teachers, doctors, and lawyers) or management positions (finance or real estate managers were 2-4 times as likely to be single, and roughly 3-5 times as likely to be divorced as their male counterparts. The female/male ratio was closest to parity for the lower paid profession of college teacher, in contrast to the higher sexual differentials in single status and divorce for lawyers (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1973a:539-542). Professionally trained women who remain single or choose not to have children are better able to pursue careers without interruption and advance professionally (Yohalem, 1979:28-36, 191; Epstein, 1970:96-112; Astin, 1969:26-33; Ferber and Huber, 1979; Mueller and Campbell, 1977).

These choices underscore the persistence of fundamental differences in women's and men's relations to elite positions within the class structure. In relation to other males the men who pursue such careers are best placed to enjoy marriage, children, a wife who assists at home, and high income (Havens, 1973; Fowlkes, 1980). On the other hand, the women who seek careers are first, among those least likely to marry or have children; second, if single and supporting families, will have family incomes 64-77 percent (or less) those of married career men (U.S. Bureau of the Census,

1973a:507-512); third, if married, are more likely to divorce (Cherlin, 1979:162-164); and fourth, when they divorce, are certain to suffer precipitous decline (of possiblly 30-60 percent or more) in family income (Hoffman and Holmes, 1976:44-45; Kohen, Brown and Feldberg, 1979:234).

5. The largest concentration of married women in the professional and managerial occupational categories is still found in the traditionally female, low paid professions of elementary school (and kindergarten) teaching, and nursing. These two occupations account for more than forty percent of married women (with husband present) in all professions and managerial positions. Common dual professional and managerial patterns such as (1) husband and wife teachers (at secondary and elementary school levels, respectively [Carter and Glick, 1976:201]), and other husband-wife combinations in the lower level professional and technical fields; (2) wife managers and accountants in family businesses; and (3) wives with salaried jobs who support husbands engaged in declining businesses and farms, have a long history and importance for the growing, subordinate sectors of the new middle class, the Black middle class, and marginal small business and farm owning classes (Landry and Jendrick, 1978; Bolin, 1978; Carter and Glick, 1976:194-196). The latter classes are strongly represented in row 1 of Table 3 (as well as in adjacent rows). They constitute the major segment of the class structure in which wives significantly outweigh husbands in economic contribution and in the prevention of their families' decline in class position. Subordinate, new middle class families, which exhibit more typical patterns of wife economic contribution, are represented in rows 6-8.

The history of married women in subordinate professions points to first, the critical stimulus to this employment provided by rising social

standards of living, the economic squeeze confronting marginal propertied classes, increasing costs of education and maintenance of children's future class position, and other economic factors which the dual-career framework sleights. Second, during the twentieth century women's position in the professions has not advanced automatically after momentary breakthroughs (1900-1920, and possibly the 1970's) [Chafe, 1972:89-93; Stricker, 1979: 478; Blitz, 1974:37-39]. Periods of reversal, and channeling of women into subordinate fields (elementary school teaching, nursing, and others) have left their mark on contemporary women's options. Beyond the domain of interpersonal issues, socially organized (women's) movements, the political climate, and governmental and institutional action have strongly affected even the limited gains of married women in professional and managerial occupatons (Scharf, 1980:43-110).

6. The most significant occupational developments in the post-World War Two period have been (and continue to be) growth of married women's employment in clerical, lower level professional and service jobs, and the increasing dependence of working class and subordinate middle class families on two full-time incomes. These developments overshadow the growth of the tiny elite dual-career stratum described in Point 1.

The relation of married-couple families to the economic system has been transformed in the advanced Western capitalist societies generally as a result of the unprecedented upsurge in married women's employment (OECD, 1979:27-28; Tilly and Scott, 1978). In the United States the proportion of married women (with husband present) who were contributing to family incomes through employment grew from less than 15 percent prior to World War Two, to just under one quarter (23.8 percent) by 1950, and most recently (January 1980) to more than one half of these wives (U.S.

Department of Labor, 1975: 18; 1980a: 3).

The class sectors most dependent on the two-earner pattern are subordinate middle class and working class groups, rather than the elite new middle class. These groups are strongly represented in rows 4-6 of Table 3, which include husbands with incomes ($ 8,000. through $ 14,999.) just below the median for all husbands (employed full-time, year-round in 1978). The factors which underlie the strong labor force attachment of wives in this group (one-third or more of whom were employed full-time, year-round) are very different from the exclusively cultural influences considered critical by the dual-career framework of analysis.

The peak employment participation of wives of this economic position can be explained by the interaction of two inversely-related conditions: first, family economic need; and second, the wife's possession of labor market skills (and her employment availability because of smaller family size and reduced constraint in the form of childcare activity). The wives of working class and subordinate middle class position experience <u>both</u> the economic inadequacy of their husbands' incomes (relative to family needs) and their own preparedness (and increased availability) for job-holding. Their contribution makes a significant difference for their families' consumption levels (Vickery, 1979: 184; Masnick and Bane, 1980: 94) and ability to weather periods of inflation and unemployment (Hayghe, 1976: 18). At the same time, wives at the median and below-median (husband) income levels have more years of schooling and fewer children than wives in the poorest

working class sectors (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980b: 132-133).

While in the early twentieth century it may well have been mothers in the most destitute working class families who sought continuous employment (Tilly and Scott, 1980), this was no longer the case in the 1960s and 1970s. Rather the cleavage between the poorest (rows 1-3) versus below-median-income (rows 4-6) working class sectors is expressed in the employment barriers confronted by wives in the former group. These wives are barred from continuous or adequate employment by a set of interrelated constraints--low education levels (and early school leaving), early marriage and pregnancy, limited full-time job experience, and large family size (Shea et al, 1970:147-148; Sandell, 1978:27; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980a:33; Moore and Waite, 1977:225). In contrast, wives in below-median income working class sectors are better equipped for employment, and when employed, are most likely to be working full-time and to hold clerical (rather than operative) jobs.

During 1970-1979 the largest numerical increase in employment for women occured in clerical occupations. This was accompanied by the emergence of a new working class dual-earner pattern (particularly among younger, better educated couples) in which husbands held blue-collar (craft or operative) and wives, clerical, jobs (Hayghe, 1976:17; Braverman, 1974:354). The rate of growth of clerical employment for women nearly equalled, and that of service employment outpaced, that of professional employment (reversing the latter's predominance in the 1960's). Thus, the influx of working class and subordinate middle class wives into the labor market was accompanied by a continued or accelerated trend toward new female employment in traditional clerical and service sectors. Contrary to the dual-career analysis, expansion of professional employment was losing steam, not accelerating, in this period.

The variations in nonelite wives' labor force attachment (extent of full-time, continuous employment) and placement (access to clerical jobs) were determined by interrelated class, family and sex-specific conditions. Their patterns were shaped by rising living standards and inflation, families' economic needs and insecurity, wives' labor market skills (especially in educational backgrounds), and the limitations of job availability in segregated female occupational sectors (Dicesare, 1975:26-30; U.S. Department of Labor, 1980b:174-175; Barrett, 1979:46-54; Wool, 1976:191, 336-338). To a large extent the position of newly employed working class and subordinate middle class wives remained distinct from that of women of the elite, new middle class in higher level occupations. Relatively few of the former group experienced job mobility into the professional and managerial occupational ranks. Access to advanced professional training and credentialing required for the practice of elite professions was even more restricted (Shea et al, 1970:156-157; Astin, 1969; chapter 2).

One additonal source of adult women's movement into working class, traditionally female job sectors (especially clerical, operative and service occupations) was the dramatic growth in the 1970's of families supported by women. These women manifested the strongest, most continuous pattern of labor force attachment, which surpassed even that of wives in struggling working class families (Ross and Sawhill, 1975:30-31; Johnson, 1979:51). Their families also account for most of the recent increase in "working poor" families that subsist on incomes below the poverty level. (Johnson, 1978: 33-37).

These recent developments--the growth in employment of working class wives, subordinate middle class wives, and (primarily working class) women supporting families--remain outside the field of vision of the dual-career framework. The neglect of fundamental developments is a result not only

of the framework's elite class focus. It also stems from the framework's erroneous assumption of the predominance of purely non-economic motivations for employment in emerging "postindustrial" society, its consequent lack of understanding of the actual factors which underlie wives' employment, its disregard of persistent occupational segregation and class subordination in the location of women's employment, and also, its disregard of family economic patterns outside the conventional husband-wife family mold.

7. Unlike the elite dual-career couples, the vast majority of working class and subordinate middle class dual-earner couples are not in an economic position to use many thousands of dollars of personal income to lighten their personal burden of labor. The latter couples' struggle to reconcile demands of family and work on the basis of sexual equality requires social policies of support, rather than individualistic (dual-career) strategies predicated on elite class resources.

The dual-career framework takes for granted the economic resources of the elite, new middle class couples that serve as its model for social innovation. The framework fails to consider the exceptional character of the couples' situation, or its consequences for the generalizability of the elite, dual-career "lifestyle." The interpersonal solutions advocated by the dual-career framework (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1978, 1980) assume that employed wives and husbands are in a position to purchase expensive services, and leisure time for themselves, as preconditions. The purchases are accomplished within the context of existing (elite) personal resources, which are guaranteed by the couples' position in the class system. These lifestyle solutions to the problems of dual-employment do not require basic changes in economic or social welfare institutions, or the redistribution of resources to provide women's and families' support services. The individualized focus of the dual-career framework's

strategies for "coping," and isolation of interpersonal issues from broader contexts, rests upon the unacknowledged assumption of elite(husband provided) resources. The framework's neglect of collective strategies, and conditions of equality (and independence) for all women, follows from this premise.

Two examples of practices discussed in the dual-career literature illustrate the problematic aspects of this assumption. The first, employment of domestic housekeepers and childcare staff (frequently on a live-in basis), is widely engaged in, though rarely assessed adequately by the studies (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976: 12-13, 48, 97, 182, 232; 1971b: 223; Holmstrom, 1973: 67; Poloma and Garland, 1971: 750; for a critical discussion, see Hunt and Hunt, 1977). The second, the use of flexibly-scheduled husband-wife part-time employment (and jobsharing) patterns, is frequently mentioned as an option, but rarely achieved (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976: 18, 366; 1980, 32, 108-137). Both practices assume the ability to spend (or forego) large monetary resources, and highlight the incompatibility of this assumption with the realities confronting the vast majority of nonelite, employed wives. It is significant that alternative resources--contributions of time (for example, in childcare) by relatives or neighbors, or mobilization of family and community action to generate institutional reform--do not figure in the dual-career analysis, in spite of their importance for employed mothers (Dickinson, 1975:224; Sidel, 1978:155-173; Foner, 1980:417-572; Seifer, 1973).

The cost of employment of full-time domestic workers by dual-career couples can be estimated as ranging from $3,500. to $10,000. per year (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1973a: 11; "Two Income Couples," 1980:84). That of husbands' shifting to part-time employment or jobsharing on a rotating or continuous basis could amount to possibly a third of total

family income. Both practices are economically unfeasible for nonelite families. They suggest unintended irony when placed in the context of working class and subordinate middle class conditions. In the area of childcare services, most families with employed mothers are constrained to seek free care of pre-teenage children (Dickinson, 1975:224).

Such constraints are, of course, even more effective in the case of household labor services. Both childcare and housework have remained the major responsibility of wives, even when they are employed. The persistence of domestic inequality is rationalized on the basis of wives' lesser contribution to the total family income (Vanek, 1980: 227-279; Ferree and Turbin, 5). An approach, such as the dual-career analysis, which takes for granted the use of hired domestic labor, has little value in this social context. The notion that easily-created part-time job arrangements can increase husbands' family involvement and promote sexual equality is similarly abstract in the context of current working class (and subordinate middle class) conditions. In the absence of a major increase in wives' earning power (through elimination of sexual pay differentials), part-time employment for husbands would be very costly for these families. The real function of part-time work arrangements for working class families has been very different: the existence of a widespread pattern of women's part-time employment has reproduced wives' subordination in terms of first, their dependence on husbands' greater earnings, second, their concentration in the lowest paid, dead-end (part-time) job sectors, and third, their continued primary responsibility for domestic labor (Jephcott, 1962:91-176; Ferree, 1976:439; Leon and Bednarzik, 1978).

Actual struggles of nonelite wives for sexual equality in employment and family life raise social policy issues that are barely touched on by the dual-career analysis. These include policies affecting equal pay for

women; access to traditionally male occupations; improvements in the quality of worklife; provision of vastly expanded childcare services; provision of family planning and reproductive health services; provision of paternal work leaves and economic support; adult training for women with noncontinuous employment histories; and cultural and legal support for domestic sharing of household tasks (Adams and Winston, 1980:259-266; Ratner, 1980: 419-440; Barrett, 1979:54-61; Shortlidge, 1977). The dual-career framework's implicit assumptions concerning availability of (elite) personal resources, and the strategies of individualistic adjustment which follow from this, obscure fundamental social needs that the growth of (nonelite) wives' employment has brought to the fore.

Conclusion: Sources and Significance of the Dual-Career Conception

The seven empirical points presented above have examined the misleading character of the dual-career analysis as a guide to actual developments in wives' employment and family economic patterns at different levels of the class system, or to the related problems of social policy. In spite of these shortcomings, however, the influence of this analysis continues to grow.

This influence extends beyond the social science literature which has been discussed to diffusion in varied popular media. It can be traced directly in the new genre of counseling and "how-to" manuals which offer couples (and particularly the aspiring dual-career wife) advice on "how to cope" (Ryglewicz and Thaler, 1980), how to "make it together" (Shaevitz and Shaevitz, 1980); and how to rise to the top (Wheeler-Bennett, 1977) and "struggle for a new identity" (Roland and Harris, 1979; see also, Hall and Hall, 1979; Jones and Jones, 1980; Bird, 1979; and Rice, 1979). Similar messages are carried by large circulation magazines (reaching over 300,000 subscribers apiece after only three years,

or less, of publication), Working Woman and McCall's Working Mother. And popularization spills over into generalized media, such as Newsweek ("The Superwoman Squeeze. Cover Story," 1980), Money magazine ("Two Income Couples--Report," 1980), or television soap operas (for example, "All My Children," November 1980).

The rapid diffusion of this sociological concept of recent invention (1969) reflects the dual-career's framework's success in interpreting contemporary social change by drawing on prevailing cultural and ideo logical currents. The framework synthesizes new social aspirations and norms of behavior with highly traditional ideologies of individual action and social change. The innovative element consists of the framework's emphasis on a feminist notion of domestic sexual equality, and its recognition that such equality depends on the reordering of relationships between work and family life. These ideas inform the dual-career conception's standard for evaluating contemporary family forms, and constitute a genuine contribution to a critical social analysis.

The traditional elements center on the framework's analysis of social change in terms of first, an exceptional elite that paves the way for the masses; second, an open occupational system that allows career mobility to all individuals with merit (including women); and third, a self-reliant system of families which achieve internal equality and companionship, and social success, through their own efforts. Contemporary belief in the legitimacy of the American social system rests squarely on popular acceptance of the efficacy of these occupational and family mechanisms (Coleman and Rainwater, 1978:225-241; Safilios-Rothschild, 1971: 64-65). The antecedents of these elements of the dual-career synthesis can be traced far back to the 17th century English

Protestant ideal of "companionate marriage" in the private realm, and that of "the career open to talent" in public affairs of Napoleonic France (Hamilton, 1978:64-75; Eisenstein, 1980:18-26; Hobsbawm, 1962: 182-199). The dual-career framework links these classic ideologies of worldly success in a new manner, by making the companionate couple (i.e., the husband and wife jointly) the unit of elite career mobility.

This synthesis is ingenious and has broad cultural appeal. It explains seemingly new departures--changes in wives' employment, family arrangements and norms of sexual equality--in the context of traditional ideological beliefs: the openness of the occupational system to career advancement by a new meritocratic elite, who serve as a model for the rest of society. By channeling feminist concerns with sexual equality into an elite vision of familiy and career advancement, the dual-career framework distorts the realities of social class constraint, occupational segregation and female subordination that shape the experience of close to ninety-nine percent of employed adult women (Points 1, 2 and 4). Its skewed conception of the class dimension of recent processes of change renders the framework particularly misleading with respect to the experience of working class and subordinate middle class wives, and women supporting families. This distortion, in the context of the appeal to broad feminist aspirations and concerns with sexual equality, gives the dual-career analysis a partially ideological cast (Mannheim, 1936:194-196). The potentially transformative ideal (of sexual equality) is narrowly focused around concern with a dual-career lifestyle objective that is both unrealizable for the vast majority of women, and that leaves basic structural social inequalities intact. Contemporary analysis of women's employment and family change must move beyond the limitations of this framework, ecompass the situations of nonelite women, and recognize the

major ways in which sexual and economic hierarchies continue to shape women's specific relation to the class system.

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